1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

leaves out of the *kōbū*, and brushed the cut ends of the taro stalks rapidly with it, wetting them with the *tama'ug* mixture, and stirring the stalks about with his other hand, to make sure that each stalk was touched by it. As he brushed he called out, not very loud, but in a most reverent and impressive tone: '*Ah, Buntagori, Bunamoa, Bunabo'oi, Na'uston, Mutsbut, Bunmoramor, Buna'ian. Tamū iwi, tamū piar, tamū tʃan.*' The first part of this consists of names of people of the village who are dead, and are now *urar*, who were good gardeners in their time. All were women, except Na'uston, who was Pinari's mother's brother. Buntagori was Pinari's mother. The second part means: 'Taro here, our taro, good taro.' He carried out the same procedure at each plot (Pl. 39*a*). The order of the names varied slightly, and the formula was sometimes as follows:

'*Di ma ta tamū pa ēto piar, no me born ia.*'
Bring (*imper. part.*) some taro by medicine our, come and throw it away.

He also dabbed the mixture on the logs outlining the plots, but without saying anything. Kwimau helped with this, but for the washing of the taro stalks she merely stood by holding the *kōbū* in readiness for Pinari to dip the bundle of leaves into it.

The *urar* thus called upon come up later on. If any of the men hide and watch for them they can see and hear them. They look at the taro that has been planted, and they laugh, and say: 'The people have planted bad taro, by and by they will have nothing to eat. Let us give them good taro.' Then they go and get good taro from Kunua, from Lontis, from Hanahan, from all the places where the taro is good, and come and plant it in place of the other, which they take up and throw away.

After washing the last bundle of taro stalks Pinari wiped his hands on some leaves, which he carefully buried under a heap of rubbish in one corner of the ground.

Kwimau held out the *kōbū* to the women, and they all washed their hands in it before going to plant the taro. Finally Kwimau dipped her own hands in the mixture and rubbed them over the legs of her youngest child, aged between one and two, who was just recovering from yaws and was very sickly-looking and backward in walking. This was done to make his legs strong. Nothing was said by her as she rubbed him with the mixture.

The *kōbū* containing the *tama'ug* mixture, from which most of

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

754 When a man becomes ill, and it is suspected that some one has
755 'made poison' against him, certain remedies may be used in the
824 hope of counteracting its effects. Typical of these is the following:

Maneroa (a plant, unidentified).

Chew pieces of the root with the betel-mixture, and spit over the body of the sick man. Scrape the skin off other pieces of the root and wrap the scrapings up in leaves. Lay this bundle on the man's thigh, just below the fork. Take a bunch of *koav* leaves and wave it over his belly with a downward motion. This will send the poison down into the bundle, and it will leave the man's body, then he will get well.

If you have to go near a place where you think some one has made poison, for example over the betel-pepper vines, scrape the stem of the plant *nin* and put it on the sole of your foot, then the poison will turn to water and will not harm you.

When an enemy has 'made poison' against the whole village (i.e. in times of general sickness, such as an epidemic), the following procedure is practised; it is said to 'turn the poison to water':

Scrape the skin of the stem of two creepers, *kuritsĕ* and *karamusis*, mix with scraped coco-nut meat. Rub down some 'putty nut' and mix it with the other things. Give some of the mixture to all the men in the village, who must make fires all about the place and put the mixture into the fire. This makes a dense smoke. Then take the stem of *maribean* (*Fleurya aestuans*), cut it into small lengths, and make them into bundles, wrapping them up in leaves. Plant these in the middle of all the roads leading to the village. No one in the village must eat any of the foods usually obtained from the bush, such as mangoes and canarium almonds.

For the following account of treatment for poison, in use on the island of Pororan, I am indebted to Mr. Gordon Thomas.

'In the case of a man becoming sick from supposed poisoning the "doctor-man" will prepare a drink combining the *kobol* (the young unripe coco-nut) and the juice from the leaves of a native tree *kokohak*. The preparation is made as follows: The top of the *kobol* is cut off with a knife, care being taken that the nut does not break in the cutting, otherwise the patient will die. Ten leaves from the *kokohak* tree are then picked, and the juice—a milky fluid—is allowed to drip into the *kobol*. The juice will float on the top and have the same appearance as that of pouring oil on water. After the drops of the *kokohak* have been put in, the "doctor-man" collects the ten leaves and hides himself in the bush, there to sit in meditation until his skin becomes cold and tired with waiting. When this

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

stage has been reached, he will then collect the *kobol* and proceed to the house of the patient. Entering, he fastens the door, and gives the *kobol* to the patient, who drinks the mixture. The two of them then go outside the house and the "doctor-man" obtains the leaf of a native vine *pahu*. Biting off a portion himself he gives another portion to the patient, and the two masticate the leaf, mixing it with betel-nut; chewing and spitting out the masticated juices. The two then re-enter the house, and a *pahu* leaf is hung up inside the house in such a position as to hang near the face of the patient when he is sleeping. The patient goes to bed and sleeps. In his sleep he dreams that he is endeavouring to find the man who gave him the poison, but a spirit visits him in his dream and prevents him from seeing the man; explaining to him that he has not been poisoned at all. In the morning the "doctor-man" inquires of the patient as to what he has seen during the night. "I saw no man who had poisoned me" replies the patient, or words to that effect. "I am well now, I have not been poisoned, for the spirit told me so." The patient then makes a speedy recovery.'

Other forms of harmful magic. There are milder forms of harmful magic which are not considered in the same light as 'making poison', but as legitimate methods of punishing some one who has done you an injury. These were told to me in the course of discussions on the use of various plants for medicinal purposes. There was no secret about them, and they were clearly regarded in the same light as any other 'prescriptions'.

If a thief persistently steals your taro.

Scrape to a powder the bones of a crocodile, and bury some of this powder (*wesopinī*) on the road to the taro garden, where the thief will walk over it. When you know that he has done so, take up the package and burn it. The thief will get a bad sore on his leg.

For a man stealing coco-nuts.

Take some leaves of the shrub *rurupari*, put them into a young coco-nut which has been emptied of its milk through the eye. Lay this on the ground in the coco-nut grove. Chew the root of the same shrub with the betel-mixture, spit on some dead branches and throw them down where the coco-nut is. When the thief comes into the grove his belly will become very painful, so that he cries out. He will not be able to walk, but will crawl home and lie down in his house. Then you must watch till the tide comes in, and then plug up the hole in the shell of the young coco-nut. This makes the thief short of breath, and he stays at

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

only, and not in the preparation of 'medicines', or in any magical procedure.

In this connexion also must be mentioned the multifarious uses of lime (*iuv*). Not only is it added to the mixtures used for a number of medicinal and magical purposes, it is also efficacious alone, e.g. it is rubbed on to a man who is *iburur* (see p. 516) and on to a patient suffering from a sprain or a broken bone. Instances of its use for magical purposes both with and without areca-nut occur in almost every chapter of this book. Its importance in medicine and magic in San Cristoval is pointed out by Fox (1924, p. 245), who brings evidence to show that betel-chewing is a comparatively recent innovation, and considers that the use of lime for ceremonial purposes must be earlier. He suggests as one possible reason for its being 'considered a good conductor of *mena*', that lime is necessary for the production of dyes and pigments, especially the important red dye. Lime is not used for such a purpose in North Bougainville, so that the reason for its importance in that area must lie elsewhere. That it is considered to have some intimate connexion with the *urur* is clear from the practice of burning it to propitiate them when it is thought that some cause of offence has been given, e.g. in the act of cleaning the road beside the grave-yard, described on p. 517.

It must be remembered that these spirits of the dead, while they are feared by the living and at the same time regarded as their helpers in time of need, are not propitiated in the ordinary routine of life, but only when it is thought that they may have been angered, or when their help is required for some definite purpose. The most usual method of appeal seems to be to mention by name one or more *urur* specially appropriate to the occasion; at the taro garden those who were good gardeners, successful fishermen to ensure a good catch, and so on. Having been called upon by name, they may also be told what is desired of them in specific terms: 'Butchiar, look at that woman, bring her to me, I want her', 'Pulaget, Soat, Taining, look at our rod and catch bonito for us', 'Sawē, Malia, Kerep, look at this broken bone and fasten it'. Again, the name of the *urur* may be used without any injunction. In a treatment for strained muscle, which I witnessed, the name of the *urur* Pispoa (the spirit of a man who, when he was alive, was skilled in treating similar cases) was whispered repeatedly into a lime-pot held by the operator. I was told that Pispoa then came and stayed inside the

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

people themselves, is to counteract the influence of those who may be 'making poison' for the destruction of the individual concerned. It follows from this that since persons who are *tuuaaa* are more subject to such machinations than commoners, the ritual prescribed for them is always more complex than that employed for the ordinary person.

2. When faced with sickness, either through some cause known to him or through what he regards as 'poison', by which he means what we are accustomed to call 'black magic'.
3. To guard against the vengeance of the *urar* (spirits of the dead), where he may have given them cause to be angry with him.
4. To ensure success in his love-making.
5. To ensure success in his efforts to provide an adequate food supply, either when a fresh start is being made, as in the case of a new garden or the use of new apparatus for the first time, or else when his unaided efforts are proving unsuccessful.
6. To avenge himself upon his enemies, or to do harm to those against whom he has a grudge.

It must be remembered—the point has been stressed by Malinowski—that the additional assistance sought is not regarded by the seeker as a substitute for his own exertions. The exhortations of the women to each other to plant well and deeply were not less vehement because the *urar* had been called upon to provide good taro in place of that which they were planting, nor did the men neglect to fence the garden because ritual precautions had been taken to prevent the pigs from spoiling it. The owner of a new fishing kite must exert himself to the utmost to obtain the ten fish necessary to the ritual belonging to it. The lover does not relax his efforts to find favour in the eyes of the woman he woos by charm and spell. But an exception to this would seem to occur in the case of black magic. The sorcerer does not try to put a spear through his victim; he goes about his lawful occasions while the 'poison' works and the man wastes away to a skeleton and subsequently dies.

I have purposely used the vague term 'various means', because some of the practices included in my analysis may deserve no more important description than 'folk-medicine', while at the other end of the scale comes the ritual involving the *urar*, most if all not of which would be admitted by most anthropologists to be religious, or at least magico-religious, which latter convenient term would probably cover most of the practices and observances to be discussed in the present context. But before discussing the principles

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

underlying these 'various means', I would like to suggest that to the natives who make use of them, the differences between them are looked upon as differences in degree and not as differences in kind. Administering medicine to cure sickness is regarded as an act of precisely the same nature as hanging up the 'medicine' in the rafters of the hut to make the pain stop, and this again is not sharply distinguished from breathing the name of an *urar* over a mixture rubbed on a fish-line to ensure a good catch. The only difference is that procedure involving an appeal to the *urar* is usually undertaken only for reasons of some importance. The same word—*ēto*, which I have translated 'medicine' throughout—is always applied to the substance employed, and here again the difference is one of degree rather than of kind. The leaves to be heated and rubbed on a boil, the complex mixture used in the taro garden in conjunction with an appeal to the *urar*, and substances such as *sisiwa* which possess magical power in themselves, and work independently of spell or spirit, are all alike *ēto*, but some are stronger medicine than others.

At the same time, if the principles underlying various forms of remedy and ritual be analysed, they will be found to admit of classification, and it may perhaps be worth while to consider some of them, provided it is clearly understood that the classification is purely theoretical, and that no hard and fast line would be drawn by the natives between the various categories.

Many medicines for the treatment of sickness are used in much the same way as we should use our own remedies in like case, they are swallowed by or rubbed upon the patient. Whether the plants in the Melanesian's pharmacopoeia actually possess curative properties could probably be determined by analysis, but a great bulk of material is required for this purpose, and the quantity and condition of the specimens I brought home did not permit of it.[1] In some cases, where the plants have been identified, they occur also in reports on the materia medica of other primitive peoples, and in a few instances analyses there given indicate that there may be some scientific justification for their use. Possibly in other remedies the betel-mixture which is their almost invariable accompaniment may, by the astringency of the areca-nut or the pungency of the lime, actually have some beneficial effect apart from the

[1] The treatment of sickness as practised among these natives is discussed in detail in *Folk-lore*, vol. xlvi, June 1935.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

leaves or roots to which the native pins his faith. More likely still, in other cases, it may be the massage that produces the desired effect, with little reference to what is actually rubbed in or on to the patient, like some of our patent hair restorers. But when all these possibilities have been taken into account, in the majority of cases it seems highly probable that the medicine acts, when it acts at all, solely through the power of suggestion.

What may perhaps be considered as an extension of this idea comes into play when the 'medicine' is rubbed on knife, digging-stick, or fish-line, to ensure that the implement shall do its work with the maximum efficiency.

Examples have been given in an earlier portion of this chapter of the well-known principle described by Sir James Frazer as 'contagious magic', whereby treatment meted out to an object that has been attached to, belonged to, or even come into physical contact with, an individual, reacts on the individual himself, even though the object treated may have been for some time removed from him. This kind of magic seems to be used almost exclusively with evil intent; I have in my records no instance where it was done for the individual's good.

By far the greater part of the magical procedure of these people comes into the other of Frazer's main categories, which he calls homoepathic magic, chiefly in the rather specialized form usually described as 'mimetic magic'. Examples occur in almost every department of native life. As illustrations may be cited, at random, the keeping of the contraceptive root in the rafters, so that 'as it hardens in the smoke, so the woman's belly is fastened so that she cannot conceive'; the avoidance of food boiled in water during the seclusion of a girl at her first menstrual period, lest the flow of blood should be too profuse; the chewing, by the boys wearing the *upi*, of the long tap-root of a certain plant, 'the longer the root chewed, the longer the hair will grow'. All these reasons were given in so many words by the natives themselves, and from their demeanour I gathered that this was what they actually believed, and not a convenient method of putting off the too inquisitive ethnographer. It is noteworthy, incidentally, that the corresponding phraseology ('As this . . . so that') is not embodied in the form of words—where such is present—employed in conjunction with this variety of magic, as is frequently the case in other regions.

Not far removed from mimetic magic are those cases which

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

lime-pot, making the lime powerful. Lime from this pot was then used in massaging the patient.

The question now arises, are the *urar* thus addressed being cajoled into conferring a favour, or commanded to perform a task which they cannot refuse? This has been suggested as a criterion separating religion from magic (Rivers, 1914, vol. ii, p. 405). It is true that most of the formulae are couched in the imperative. But the reverent tone in which they were spoken, in cases where I actually saw the ritual performed (less evident where it is merely related), leaves me in no doubt that it is a plea, not a command, which is intended. This is supported by the fact that the address to the *urar* is sometimes preceded by an offering of food burnt in the fire for them, or some bit of ritual involving lime. It is also consonant with the general attitude of awe, largely mingled with terror, which characterizes the relations between human beings and the *urar* throughout. (See Chapter XIV.)

In some cases formulae are used in which the *urar* do not figure. These may take the form of a direct command: 'Come, bonito, come plenty, come to my village', 'Garfish, garfish, come and take hold of my line'. Or the command may be given to the apparatus to do its work: 'Catch them, catch them', said to the bonito hook, or 'Fetch the man here', to the medicine used in war magic. Again, the formula may be a simple asseveration that what is required will, or has, come to pass: 'You and I spit on the taro, now it is large', 'All the women are waiting with their baskets, to-morrow the place will be full of *tsuwaluy*'.

In all cases where formulae are used, they are kept secret. In some, notably those used in bonito magic, it was stated that the words must be passed on only to a son or a sister's son, in others they might be told to any one, provided payment were made. I have instances in my collection of such knowledge having been obtained from father, mother, mother's brother, and grandparents, as well as from strangers. Love magic is often referred to the people of the mountains; this is interesting, as the relations between the mountain people and the coastal people are not normally friendly.

This brings us to the consideration of the place of these formulae in the native scheme of magico-religious procedure. It will have been noticed that in many cases no mention is made of any words being spoken. It may be that in some of these, the secret part of the procedure was either intentionally or inadvertently

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

158 775 828 some five miles away, he had not had time to go there in reality before he was caught), and then he came back and took the road to the old village (in which the brothers had died) and one of the *urar* told him to come along with them. Then his son came and took his arm and told him he must not run after people, and brought him back to his own house, and he went to sleep. Since then his back and his legs had been hurting him. He looked terribly thin and worn, like a person recovering after a long illness.

The third case, which followed seven days after the one just described, was that of Tchiriv, a young man aged about twenty-five. He was lying on the front verandah of one of the huts, during a dance, when he suddenly jumped up and ran about shouting and throwing in all directions the pile of logs which were kept under the verandah for use as firewood. The people all ran away and shut themselves into their houses. He seized hold of a big *mabu* (musical instrument made of a hollowed log with a mouthpiece of coco-nut, an article of value) belonging to a neighbour, and smashed it all to pieces. Presently four of the younger men rushed up to him together, and seized him, and brought him, kicking and struggling, to a bench outside one of the huts, where they held [755] him down, screaming, while another man blew powdered lime over him.[1] Presently he quietened down and was put to bed in his hut. The next day he remained indoors, and they said he was sick. Matarē said he didn't know that he had broken Togen's *mabu*; when they told him he would be very sorry and would pay for it. [788 177] Matarē told me that Tchiriv said he had been to the graveyard to get some coco-nuts from the trees there, and because the priest had forbidden it, he did not make a fire and burn some taro for the *urar*, so that they should not be angry with him for taking coco-nuts from their ground. So the *urar* were angry with him and made him mad. I did not see him at all that day until the evening, when he came out of the hut, which was very near to my house, and walked past my fence with his eyes turned away. I took no notice of him at that time, but next day when I found him standing by the fence, looking sheepish, I made a friendly remark to him. He seemed startled, but soon after came up on to my verandah and

[824] [1] There is also a plant, called *pindī*, the leaves of which, if chewed with the betel-mixture and spat on to the head of the affected person, will cause the *urar* to leave him.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

supply of more or less local stories associating various stones or rocks[1] with *urar* and attributing to them certain powers and activities. I have notes on a number of these, of which the following are given as typical:

Mururi is the name of an *urar*; he is a rock on the beach at Timputs, which has a hole in its base. All the driftwood collects there, but no one takes it for firewood. Once a man did take some, and Mururi was very angry and prevented him from catching any fish. Some one who knew about Mururi told him what he had done.

There is a stone on the beach near Kurtatchi, which is an *urar* called Musinē. At night he becomes a man and goes fishing in the sea. He belongs to the Naboin clan; the Nakarib people cannot see him when he is a man. Once he had a mouth, but the sea dashed a big tree against his mouth and broke it.

Tawalir (the word means 'branch') is a horizontal stalagmitic formation, somewhat resembling the branch of a tree, at the lower edge of a big hole in the limestone cliff near Tabut. The story is that Tawalir used to be several miles farther east, but it quarrelled with another stone there, and said: 'You stop here, I will go and be master at the other point (the other horn of a bay).' So he went across the bay and climbed the cliff to the place where he is now. At night he comes to life and walks about. He is an *urar*.

Ku'enia is a rock on the east coast of Buka, near Malasang. It has a flat top. Fishermen put fish on it for the stone, and the stone eats them.

Matapar is another rock a little farther along the same coast. When men go fishing they take some sand and throw it on to the top of the stone, then plenty of little fish come close inshore.

Tonopoi is a rock which gives a man boils. Then he goes and rubs his boils against the stone, and says: 'Take back what you gave me.' Then the boils get well. This stone belongs to the Nakarib people.

Karakela is a rock which sticks up out of the water. If a very high tide comes and threatens to swamp the shore, the stone calls out and sends it back, saying the sea must not come up and spoil the places where it gets its food.

[1] The native word *wats* is used for both 'stone' and 'rock', so it is difficult to make a distinction. Those I have seen were in most cases large pieces which had at some time in the past broken away from the cliffs near by.

5: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930)1935
ON6 Buka ON6

A child who is always ailing is thought to be strengthened by being rubbed all over with water containing the leaves of *roabē* (*Desmodium adhaerens*). 757 278

Local Pain

A very general complaint is of "pains in the skin," which seem to be of a rheumatic nature. They are treated by tying a piece of fibre tightly round the place where the pain is greatest, and by rubbing the skin over the site of the pain with a mash made by chewing the leaves, roots or bark of any one of a number of specified trees or plants (all unidentified).

For pain in the back the bark of *winoa* (Canarium almond) is scraped, mixed thoroughly with hot water, and rubbed on the back. The bark of this tree exudes a resinous gum which is stated by Nāḍkarṇi (p. 153) to be stimulant and rubefacient. It may therefore be of use in this connexion as a counter-irritant.

Headaches are frequent, especially a pain between the eyes (*weswios*), which is attributed to the sun burning the eyes. As a rule, the sufferer first binds a piece of fibre tightly round his head. He may then hold his head over the smoke of *gartan* (*Calamus* sp.) leaves mixed with powdered lime, or pour over his head water in which the leaves of *kakariuk* (*Selaginella flabellata*) are soaking, or rub his forehead with a bundle of the leaves of *mansisian* (*Piper* sp.) into which a little lime has been sprinkled. The crushed leaves of another variety of *Selaginella* (*S. imbricata*) are used in India as a local application to the head for the relief of headache (Nāḍkarṇi, p. 237) and the leaves of a species of *Piper* "are applied to the temples in headache for relieving pain" (Dymock, p. 600, quoting from Dutt's *Hindu Materia Medica*). [753] [164]

In some of the prescriptions it is necessary to collect the leaves after treatment and hang them up in the rafters. As they dry, the pain will disappear. When the cure is complete, the leaves are thrown away into the sea. 755

Ear Troubles

The usual treatment for earache is to take the leaves and root of the plant *logoro* (unidentified), rub them to a pulp, and put this into the ear. 757